IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA

JUAN CARLOS RODRIGUEZ, : Civil No. 1:12-CV-830

•

Petitioner, : (Judge Caldwell)

:

v. :

: (Magistrate Judge Carlson)

COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF :

LACKAWANNA COUNTY, et al.,

:

Respondents.

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

I. Statement of Facts and of the Case

Presently before the Court is a *pro se* petition filed by the Petitioner, a state prisoner, seeking federal habeas corpus relief under 28 U.S.C. § 2254 following his prosecution in 2008 in the Court of Common Pleas of Lackawanna County on state assault charges. This is the second such petition filed by Rodriguez in the past three months. On February 9, 2012, Rodriguez filed a similar petition, which was dismissed by this Court on March 16, 2012, without prejudice, since Rodriguez's first *pro se* petition was the very model of an unexhausted petition, a habeas corpus petition which, on its face, revealed that the Petitioner has not yet exhausted his state remedies. Rodriguez v. Court of Common Pleas of Lackawanna County, No. 1:12-CV-256, 2012 WL 911888 (M.D.Pa. March 16, 2012).

Rodriguez's current petition does not address this exhaustion issue which was previously identified for the Petitioner in any meaningful way. However, our review of the docket in Rodriguez's state criminal case reveals that significant exhaustion issues remain in this litigation. That docket, a copy of which is attached, reflects that Rodriguez was charged with assault in September of 2008, pled guilty to this offense in October of 2008, and was sentenced in January of 2009. Following this sentencing, the docket reveals that Rodriguez engaged in very limited and halting efforts to litigate this case, but has failed to fully exhaust his available state remedies. Thus, Rodriguez filed, but did not perfect, a direct appeal to the state Superior Court, which dismissed the appeal in July of 2009. The docket reveals that Rodriguez then took no steps to pursue and form of post conviction relief in the state courts for two and one-half years, until January of 2012, when he filed a pro se motion for writ of mandamus with the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, which was denied by that court.

In addition to this failure to exhaust his state remedies, Rodriguez's latest petition contains another flaw which compels its dismissal in its current form. The petition seeks Rodriguez's release, but also demands compensatory and punitive damages from the Commonwealth, a form of relief which is not available from this Court through habeas corpus petitions. Because Rodriguez's current petition remains unexhausted and reflects a profound and fundamental confusion regarding the relief

available to this Petitioner, it is recommended that this second petition also be dismissed, without prejudice to the filing of a proper habeas corpus petition.

II. Discussion

A. Rodriguez's Federal Habeas Petition Is Premature Since the Petitioner Has Not Exhausted His State Remedies

In this case, we find that this petition is subject to summary dismissal pursuant to Rule 4 of the Rules Governing Section 2254 Cases in the United States District Courts. Rule 4 provides in pertinent part: "If it plainly appears from the petition and any attached exhibits that the petitioner is not entitled to relief in the district court, the judge must dismiss the petition and direct the clerk to notify the petitioner." Rule 4 of the Rules Governing Section 2254 Cases in the United States District Courts.

Summary dismissal of this habeas petition would be appropriate here since it is well-settled that state prisoners seeking relief under Section 2254 must satisfy specific, and precise, procedural standards. Among these procedural prerequisites is a requirement that the petitioner "has exhausted the remedies available in the courts of the State" before seeking relief in federal court. 28 U.S.C. § 2254(b). In instances where a state prisoner has failed to exhaust the legal remedies available to him in the state courts, federal courts typically will refuse to entertain a petition for habeas corpus. See Whitney v. Horn, 280 F.3d. 240, 250 (3d Cir. 2002).

This statutory exhaustion requirement is rooted in principles of comity and reflects the fundamental idea that the state should be given the initial opportunity to pass upon and correct alleged violations of the petitioner's constitutional rights. O'Sullivan v. Boerckel, 526 U.S. 838, 844 (1999). As the Supreme Court has aptly observed: "a rigorously enforced total exhaustion rule" is necessary in our dual system of government to prevent a federal district court from upsetting a state court decision without first providing the state courts the opportunity to correct a constitutional violation. Rose v. Lundy, 455 U.S. 509, 518 (1982). Requiring exhaustion of claims in state court also promotes the important goal of ensuring that a complete factual record is created to aid the federal courts in their review of a § 2254 petition. Walker v. Vaughn, 53 F.3d 609, 614 (3d Cir. 1995). A petitioner seeking to invoke the writ of habeas corpus, therefore, bears the burden of showing that all of the claims alleged have been "fairly presented" to the state courts, and the claims brought in federal court must be the "substantial equivalent" of those presented to the state courts. Evans v. Court of Common Pleas, 959 F.2d 1227, 1231 (3d Cir. 1992); Santana v. Fenton, 685 F.2d 71, 73-74 (3d Cir. 1982). A petitioner cannot avoid this responsibility merely by suggesting that he is unlikely to succeed in seeking state relief, since it is well-settled that a claim of "likely futility on the merits does not

excuse failure to exhaust a claim in state court." Parker v.Kelchner, 429 F.3d 58, 63 (3d Cir. 2005).

While this exhaustion requirement compels petitioners to have previously given the state courts, a fair "opportunity to apply controlling legal principles to the facts bearing upon [the petitioner's] constitutional claim," <u>Picard v. Connor</u>, 404 U.S. 270, 276 (1971), this requirement is to be applied in a commonsense fashion. Thus, the exhaustion requirement is met when a petitioner submits the gist of his federal complaint to the state courts for consideration, without the necessity that the petitioner engage in some "talismanic" recitation of specific constitutional claims. <u>Evans</u>, 959 F.2d at 1230-33. Similarly, a petitioner meets his obligations by fairly presenting a claim to the state courts, even if the state courts decline to specifically address that claim. <u>See Dye v. Hofbauer</u>, 546 U.S. 1(2005) (per curiam); <u>Johnson v. Pinchak</u>, 392 F.3d 551, 556 (3d Cir. 2004).

Here, we previously found that Rodriguez had failed to exhaust his state remedies, and a review of the docket in the Petitioner's state case continues to confirm that this is an unexhausted petition. Since Rodriguez must first seek relief from the courts of Pennsylvania, and these state court records continue to define his petition as one in which the prisoner-petitioner "has [not yet] exhausted the remedies available in the courts of the State," this petition should be dismissed with instructions that

Rodriguez must first attempt to exhaust his state remedies before seeking relief in federal court. 28 U.S.C. § 2254(b).

B. Rodriguez May Not Seek Damages in a Habeas Corpus Petition

Summary dismissal of this petition is also appropriate because Rodriguez's latest petition constitutes an inappropriate use of the writ of habeas corpus. The writ of habeas corpus, one of the protections of individual liberties enshrined in our Constitution, serves a specific, and well-defined, purpose. The writ of habeas corpus exists to allow those in the custody of the state to challenge in court the fact, duration and lawfulness of that custody. As the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit has aptly noted: "The underlying purpose of proceedings under the 'Great Writ' of habeas corpus has traditionally been to 'inquire into the legality of the detention, and the only judicial relief authorized was the discharge of the prisoner or his admission to bail, and that only if his detention were found to be unlawful." Powers of Congress and the Court Regarding the Availability and Scope of Review, 114 Harv. L.Rev. 1551, 1553 (2001)." <u>Leamer v. Fauver</u>, 288 F.3d 532, 540 (3d Cir. 2002). However, there is a necessary corollary to this principle, one which has long been recognized by the courts; namely, "[i]f a . . . prisoner is seeking [other relief], he is attacking something other than the fact or length of his confinement, and he is seeking something other than immediate or more speedy release-the traditional purpose of habeas corpus. In [such cases], habeas corpus is not an appropriate or available federal remedy." Preiser v. Rodriguez, 411 U.S. 475, 494 (1973).

Thus, where a prisoner wishes to constitutionally challenge some aspect of the conditions of his confinement unrelated to the fact or duration of his detention by seeking damages from prison officials, courts have repeatedly held that the writ of habeas corpus is not the proper vehicle for bringing this legal challenge. For example, in Leamer v. Fauver, supra the United States Court of Appeals discussed whether a habeas corpus petition was the appropriate tool for an inmate to use when challenging a prison placement decision, like the decision at issue in this case. In terms that are equally applicable here the Court of Appeals held that these type of claims are not cognizable under habeas, stating:

When read together, there is a logical and coherent progression of Supreme Court jurisprudence clarifying when [habeas and other civil rights relief] is unavailable: whenever the challenge ultimately attacks the "core of habeas" -the validity of the continued conviction or the fact or length of the sentence-a challenge, however denominated and regardless of the relief sought, must be brought by way of a habeas corpus petition. Conversely, when the challenge is to a condition of confinement such that a finding in plaintiff's favor would not alter his sentence or undo his conviction, an action under [other civil rights statutes] is appropriate.

Leamer, 288 F.3d at 542.

These settled legal tenets control here and are fatal to this particular habeas petition. Since it is well established that the types of complaints for damages made by

Rodriguez simply do not sound in habeas, this petition must be dismissed. The Petitioner's recourse, if any, would be through a civil rights action brought under 42 U.S.C. §1983 challenging this prison placement decision. However, because the filing requirements for habeas and §1983 actions differ, and the two types of actions raise different issues in terms of procedural requirements and substantive standards, it would not be appropriate to simply construe this pleading, which was clearly designated as a habeas petition, as a §1983 action. Instead, it is recommended that this petition be dismissed without prejudice to the Petitioner later filing a separate action under §1983 if he chooses to do so. Woodruff v. Williamson, No. 06-2310, 2009 WL 703200, at 6 (M.D. Pa. March 12, 2009)(dismissing habeas petition challenging SMU placement without prejudice to separate Bivens civil action).

IV. Recommendation

Accordingly, for the foregoing reasons, upon consideration of this Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus, IT IS RECOMMENDED that the Petition be DENIED without prejudice to the filing of a habeas corpus petition, once Rodriguez has exhausted his state remedies, or a separate civil action challenging this prison placement decision, if the Petitioner chooses to do so, and that a certificate of appealability should not issue.

The Petitioner is further placed on notice that pursuant to Local Rule 72.3:

Any party may object to a magistrate judge's proposed findings, recommendations or report addressing a motion or matter described in 28 U.S.C. § 636 (b)(1)(B) or making a recommendation for the disposition of a prisoner case or a habeas corpus petition within fourteen (14) days after being served with a copy thereof. Such party shall file with the clerk of court, and serve on the magistrate judge and all parties, written objections which shall specifically identify the portions of the proposed findings, recommendations or report to which objection is made and the basis for such objections. The briefing requirements set forth in Local Rule 72.2 shall apply. A judge shall make a de novo determination of those portions of the report or specified proposed findings or recommendations to which objection is made and may accept, reject, or modify, in whole or in part, the findings or recommendations made by the magistrate judge. The judge, however, need conduct a new hearing only in his or her discretion or where required by law, and may consider the record developed before the magistrate judge, making his or her own determination on the basis of that record. The judge may also receive further evidence, recall witnesses or recommit the matter to the magistrate judge with instructions.

Submitted this 10th day of May 2012.

S/Martin C. CarlsonMartin C. CarlsonUnited States Magistrate Judge

DOCKET



Docket Number: CP-35-CR-0002425-2008

CRIMINAL DOCKET

Court Case

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

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07/13/2008

Juan Carlos Rodriguez

CASE INFORMATION

Cross Court Docket Nos: CR-0000377-08

Judge Assigned: OTN: L4271470

Initial Issuing Authority: Robert G Russell Arresting Agency: Scranton City Police Dept

Case Local Number Type(s)

Date Filed: 09/04/2008

Initiation Date: 07/13/2008

Arrest Date:

Lower Court Docket No: CR-0000377-08 Final Issuing Authority: Robert G Russell Arresting Officer: Ash, Leonord Jr.

Case Local Number(s)

STATUS INFORMATION

Case Status: Closed

Status Date 07/10/2009

03/26/2009

01/26/2009 01/05/2009

01/05/2009 10/17/2008

10/17/2008 10/06/2008

09/04/2008

Processing Status

Appeal Decided Awaiting Appellate Court Decision

Sentenced/Penalty Imposed Awaiting Sentencing

Awaiting PSI **Awaiting Sentencing Awaiting Trial Scheduling**

Awaiting Formal Arraignment Awaiting Filing of Information

Complaint Date:

07/13/2008

CALENDAR EVENTS

Case Calendar Event <u>Type</u>

Arraignment

Sentencing

Start Date

10/17/2008

01/26/2009

Start <u>Time</u> Room

Judge Name

Schedule 1 4 1 Status

9:00 am 1:30 pm

Judge Michael J. Barrasse

Scheduled Scheduled

CONFINEMENT INFORMATION

Confinement Known As Of Confinement Type

County Jail **DOC** Confined **Destination**

SCI Albion

Location Lackawanna County Prison Confinement Reason

Still in Custody

Yes Yes

DEFENDANT INFORMATION

Date Of Birth:

02/13/2009

12/13/2010

07/06/1987

City/State/Zip: Scranton, PA 18505

Alias Name Rodriguez, Juan

Printed: 05/06/2012

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Juan Carlos Rodriguez

CASE PARTICIPANTS

Participant Type

<u>Name</u>

Defendant

Rodriguez, Juan Carlos

BAIL INFORMATION

Rodriguez, Juan Carlos

Amount

Bail Action

<u>Date</u>

Bail Type

Percentage |

Posting Date **Bail Posting Status**

Set

07/13/2008 Monetary \$50,000.00

CHARGES

Statute Description

Statute 5 4 1 Seq. 18 § 2702 §§A1

M2

Aggravated Assault

07/13/2008 07/13/2008

Offense Dt.

L4271470

2

18 § 2701 §§A 18 § 2705

Simple Assault Recklessly Endangering Another Person

07/13/2008

L4271470 L4271470

Nebbia Status: None

DISPOSITION SENTENCING/PENALTIES

Disposition

Case Event

Sequence/Description Sentencing Judge

Sentence/Diversion Program Type

Sentence Conditions

Linked Offense - Sentence

Final Disposition **Disposition Date** Offense Disposition

Section Grade Credit For Time Served

Sentence Date Incarceration/Diversionary Period

Start Date

Link Type

Linked Docket Number

Lower Court Proceeding (generic)

Lower Court Disposition

1 / Aggravated Assault

2 / Simple Assault

3 / Recklessly Endangering Another Person

09/03/2008

Waived for Court (Lower Court)

Not Final

18§2702§§A1

Waived for Court (Lower Court)

18§2701§§A

Waived for Court (Lower Court)

M2 18§2705

Guilty Plea

Pre-Trial Conference

1 / Aggravated Assault Barrasse, Michael J. Confinement

10/17/2008

Guilty Plea

01/26/2009

Min of 10.00 Years Max of 20.00 Years 10 Years to 20 Years **Final Disposition**

18§2702§§A1

198 Days

No Contact

no d/a or llp

DOCKET



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DISPOSITION SENTENCING/PENALTIES

Disposition

Case Event Sequence/Description

Sentencing Judge

Sentence/Diversion Program Type

Sentence Conditions

Linked Offense - Sentence

2 / Simple Assault

Barrasse, Michael J.

3 / Recklessly Endangering Another Person

Barrasse, Michael J.

Disposition Date

Offense Disposition

Sentence Date

Incarceration/Diversionary Period

ATTORNEY INFORMATION

Final Disposition Grade

Section

Credit For Time Served

Start Date

Link Type

Linked Docket Number

Nolle Prossed

01/26/2009

Nolle Prossed 01/26/2009

18§2705

18§2701§§A

COMMONWEALTH INFORMATION

Name:

Jennifer Lyn McCambridge

093662

District Attorney

Supreme Court No:

Phone Number(s):

(570) 963-6717 (Phone)

(Fax) (570) 941-8948

Address:

200 N Washington Ave

Scranton PA 18503

ENTRIES

Sequence Number

CP Filed Date

Document Date

Filed By

09/04/2008

Court of Common Pleas - Lackawanna

County

Original Papers Received from Lower Court

09/16/2008

10/06/2008

Moraski, Kimberly Karen

Request for Bill of Particulars

09/16/2008

Moraski, Kimberly Karen

Request for Pre-Trial Discovery and Inspection

McCambridge, Jennifer Lyn

Information Filed

Printed: 05/06/2012

AOPC 2220 - Rev 05/06/2012

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DOCKET



Docket Number: CP-35-CR-0002425-2008 CRIMINAL DOCKET

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ENTRIES Filed By Document Date Sequence Number CP Filed Date Barrasse, Michael J. 10/17/2008

Guilty Plea

Barrasse, Michael J. 01/26/2009

Order - Sentence/Penalty Imposed

02/09/2009

Barrasse, Michael J. 01/26/2009

Defendant's Rights at Sentencing

Kalinowski, Joseph Paul 02/04/2009 Motion for Reconsideration of Sentence

Kalinowski, Joseph Paul 02/04/2009 Motion for Reconsideration of Sentence

Rodriguez, Juan Carlos

02/05/2009 Formal Request for Transcript

Barrasse, Michael J. 02/09/2009 Rule to Show Cause; Rule Returnable on March 3, 2009 Hearing if Necessary on March 3, 2009 @ 9:30

Court of Common Pleas - Lackawanna

County Penalty Assessed

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania 02/12/2009 Commonwealth's Response to Defendant's Petition for Reconsideration of Sentence

Lackawanna County Probation 02/18/2009

Department Guideline Sentence Form

Barrasse, Michael J. 03/16/2009

Order Denying Motion for Reconsideration of Sentence

Kalinowski, Joseph Paul 03/25/2009

Motion for Transcripts

DOCKET



Docket Number: CP-35-CR-0002425-2008 **CRIMINAL DOCKET**

Court Case

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ENTRIES

equence Number	CP Filed Date	Document Date	Filed By		
03/26/2009			Brown, Bernard J.		
Notice of Appeal to the	ne Superior Court				
	03/27/2009		Renee Casier - Lackawanna Cty Court Reporter		
Transcript of Procee	dings Of Sentencing Bet	fore Judge Barrasse On January 2	26, 2009		
	04/01/2009		Tara B. Jones - Lackawanna Cty Court Reporter		
Transcript of Procee	dings Of Guilty Plea Bef	fore Judge Barrasse On October 1	7, 2008		
	04/01/2009	Statement of the Matters Compla	Barrasse, Michael J. Complained on Appeal		
	04/07/2009		Superior Court of Pennsylvania - Middle District		
Docketing Statemer	nt from Superior Court, r	number 556MDA09, record due Ma	ay 26, 2009		
	05/14/2009		Barrasse, Michael J.		
Memorandum of La	W				
1	06/01/2009		Court of Common Pleas - Lackawanna County		
Transmittal of Reco	ord to Appellate Court				
1	07/10/2009		Superior Court of Pennsylvania - Middle District		
Superior Court Dec	cision; appeal dismissed	, rile returned			
1	02/10/2012		Supreme Court of Pennsylvania - Middle District		
Supreme Court Or PER CURIAM: and the "Petition	A James Alpha Ord do	ay of January, 2012, the Applications and/or Extraordinary	ation for Leave to File Original Process is Gran Relief' is DENIED		

Printed: 05/06/2012

DOCKET



Docket Number: CP-35-CR-0002425-2008

CRIMINAL DOCKET

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Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Juan Carlos Rodriguez

CASE FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Last Payment Date: 04/05/2012	Assessment	<u>Payments</u>	<u>Adjustments</u>	of Last Payment: -\$22. Non Monetary Payments	<u>Total</u>
odriguez, Juan Carlos	Assessment				
Defendant					\$9.25
osts/Fees	\$11.75 \$17.60	-\$2.50 -\$3.72	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$13.88
ate Court Costs (Act 204 of 1976)			\$0.00	\$0.00	\$13.00
ommonwealth Cost - HB627 (Act 167	·			\$0.00	\$20.25
1992) ounty Court Cost (Act 204 of 1976)	\$25.65	-\$5.40	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
ounty Court Cost (Act 254 51 151 5)	\$35.00	-\$35.00 \$0.00	φυ.σσ	V	
rime Victims Compensation (Act 96 f 1984)	\$10.00	-\$2.12	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$7.88
comestic Violence Compensation (Act					
4 of 1988)	\$25.00	-\$25.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
/ictim Witness Service (Act 111 of	Ψ20.00			* 0.00	\$3.93
998)	\$5.00	-\$1.07	\$0.00	\$0.00	ψ0.00
Firearm Education and Training Fund			\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
158 of 1994) Iudicial Computer Project	\$8.00	-\$8.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
	\$2.00	-\$2.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
ATJ DA's Fingerprint Assess.	\$150.00	-\$150.00	\$0.00	Q 0.55	
(Lackawanna)		\$5.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Automation Fee (Lackawanna)	\$5.00	-\$5.00 -\$52.51	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$197.49
DNA Detection Fund (Act 185-2004)	\$250.00	-\$52.51 -\$10.34	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$39.66
Costs of Prosecution - CJEA	\$50.00	-\$10.54 -\$18.00	\$0.00	** **	\$0.00
County Costs (Lackawanna)	\$18.00	-\$18.00 -\$120.00	\$0.00	** **	\$0.00
Plea F/M (Lackawanna)	\$120.00	0.40.00	\$0.00	** **	\$292.34
Costs/Fees Totals:	\$733.00				
Restitution			\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,519.4
Restitution	\$1,900.00	-\$380.51	• •	***	\$1,519.4
Restitution Totals:	tals: \$1,900.00	-\$380.51	\$0.00	\$0.00	
Grand Totals	** *** ***	-\$821.17	\$0.00	0.00 \$0	\$1,811.8

^{** -} Indicates assessment is subrogated

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